

## ■ Ezra 7-10 - Rebuilding Identity, Discerning Boundaries

*Key Thought/Action: We are not of this unbelieving world, but we are sent into. Help us to Biblically discern boundaries.*

### Welcome/Prayer:

#### Review:

September:

Theme: Living Godly Lives Among People Who Don't Yet Believe

Theme Song: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it.*

*Seal it for Thy courts above*

Theme Verse: 1 Peter 2:11 Dear brothers, you are only visitors here. Since your real home is in heaven, I beg you to keep away from the evil pleasures of this world; they are not for you, for they fight against your very souls. The Living Bible (TLB)

- Ezra 3:3 The people who built the altar were afraid of the nations around them. But they built it anyway.
- What Godly lifestyle change are you afraid to make?
- Today, we might not look differently than the unbelieving world, but to follow Jesus is to live differently. Am I? Are you?

### Intro:

1. ■ (Dragon Shield) When our kids were younger, friend X invited one of our children to birthday party, maybe we hadn't met the parents, or maybe we were uncomfortable with the situation ... this boundaries discernment came into play.
2. Why? What's in it for me? Difficult to understand, apply, I will try, may God's Holy Spirit use all scripture as it says in 2 Timothy 3:15 to **make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

### Scripture:

1. Ezra 7
  - a. **Ezra** was in the line of Aaron, the first high priest, knew the Law of Moses very well,
  - b. **6** So Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher who **knew the Law of Moses very well.** The Lord, the God of Israel, had given Israel that law. The **king (Artaxerxes)** had given Ezra everything he asked for. That's because the Lord his **God helped him.**
  - c. A "**new Moses**" **9** Ezra had begun his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first month. (same as the Exodus)
  - d. **23** Work hard for the temple of the God of heaven. Do everything he has required. I don't want him to be angry with my kingdom and the kingdom of my sons.
  - e. And I want you to teach the people who don't know those laws. **26** Anyone who doesn't obey the law of your God must be punished.
2. Ezra 8
  - a. I looked for Levites among the people and priests. But I didn't find any. **16**
  - b. **21** I announced a **fast.**
  - c. **23** So we didn't eat anything. We **prayed** to our God about all these matters. And he answered our prayers.
  - d. **Our God helped us.** He kept us safe from enemies and robbers along the way. **32** So we **arrived** in Jerusalem.

- e. **35** Then the people sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel. They had returned from Babylon.
- 3. Ezra 9
  - a. **9** After all these things had been done, the leaders came to me. They said, "The people of Israel have committed sins. Even the priests and Levites have sinned. They haven't kept themselves separate from the nations around them. The Lord hates the practices of those nations.
  - b. **2** We leaders and officials have also married women who don't worship the Lord. By doing this, we have led the way in breaking our covenant with the Lord."
  - c. Tear robe, pulls hair from beard, sits down shocked until evening, prays hard, mourns
  - d. Highlights of his heartfelt prayer
- 4. Ezra 10
  - a. **1** Ezra weeping, confessing the people's sin ... a crowd gathers, they weep also
  - b. Shekaniah ... In spite of that, there is still hope for Israel. **3** So let's make a covenant in front of our God. Let's promise to send away all these women and their children.
  - c. **4** Get up, Ezra. This matter is in your hands. Do what you need to. We will be behind you all the way. Be brave and do it."
  - d. **5** He made them promise, and... And they made that promise.
  - e. **7** gather, or lose property and kicked out of community
  - f. **9** they all gathered upset by what they knew would happen, and because of the rain
  - g. **11** ... Separate yourselves from the nations around you. Send away your wives from other lands."
  - h. **12** The whole community answered with a loud voice. They said, "You are right! We must do as you say.
  - i. **14** delegate it to local officials to carry out
  - j. **16** ... They sat down to check out each case.
  - k. What??

## Summary:

- 1. **Difficult** Thanks to resources like Ezra-Nehemiah - Tim Mackie (The Bible Project) summary videos
  - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkETkRv9tG8> (8 min)
  - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1ded0rng0U&t=3783s> (4 hours, pastors conference)
- 2. **Important Literary features seem very purposeful**
  - a. Points to prophecies of hope, promise ...
    - i. Jeremiah 31:33 ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.
    - ii. Ezekiel 36:26 ... I will give you a new heart
  - b. 3 parts very similar
    - i. Ezra 1-6, Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah 1-7 (Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah) (rebuilding Temple, Torah, Walls)
      - 1. God stirs the heart of a King in their favor,
      - 2. opposition/problem
      - 3. Anticlimactic ending
  - c. Conclusion
    - i. Nehemiah 8-12, Nehemiah 13
      - 1. Positive Conclusion
        - a. Celebration & worship
      - 2. Negative Conclusion
        - a. Disregard for temple, scripture, and walls

**d. We need God to change our hearts**

3. Ezra 7-10

- a. Difficult to understand, apply, I will try, may God's Holy Spirit use all scripture as it says in 2 Timothy 3:15 (ESV) 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to **make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**
- b. Question on my mind: What happens to the women and children? We aren't told, not the focus of the narrative
- c. Ezra seeks to apply scripture to a difficult question
  - i. Debate on whether his application of scripture is appropriate, God's command to separate from other nations seems focused on spiritual integrity, not being led astray, not so much racial segregation. Consider these scriptures:
    1. Ruth: though she is from the surrounding nations, she comes to worship the Lord, and this relationship to marriage seems to be portrayed in scripture as a celebrated love story
    2. Ephesians 2 ... Jews and Gentiles being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.
    3. (if already married) Not to divorce spouse for being an unbeliever ... 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3
    4. 2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIRV) Do not be joined to unbelievers.
  - ii. Again, Ezra seeks to apply scripture to a difficult question. This is totally applicable to us and all generations
    1. Difficult yes, questioned yes, messy yes, ... this side of Heaven, we try to be faithful and it often isn't pretty, often isn't easy
- d. Grassroots support from the leaders and people
- e. Sometimes our boundaries need to be very open, welcoming
- f. Other times our boundaries need to be clearly defined
- g. Nehemiah 13, we will likely continue to fail, and not obey completely. **We need God to change our hearts**

**Example/Personal or Others:**

1. ■'s and ■ ??
2. ■ (Dragon Shield) When our kids were younger, friend X invited one of our children to sleepover, maybe we hadn't met the parents, or maybe we were uncomfortable with the situation ... this boundaries discernment came into play.
3. ■ My involvement with other churches/denominations/ministries in the area, I've had conversations with people who've told me that would have been frowned on in years past ... this boundaries discernment came into play.
4. As young people, who we have interest in, and date
5. Who are closest friends are
6. Who we work for or go into business with, even what business we support, buy things from
7. As parents, decisions about environments we put our kids in school, activities
8. Which friendships to encourage / discourage
9. How we apply scripture to our lives: to try to be faithful
10. When we are influencing others for in Godly ways, and when we are being led away from the Lord and His ways (even wise Solomon, led astray by foreign wives and their gods)

**Challenge/Application:**

1. *We are not of this unbelieving world, but we are sent into. Help us to Biblically discern boundaries. (Prone to wander)*

Prayer:

Song:

Benediction:

Other Resources: